

RAPAD urging local expertise to be sought before a dollar is spent on drought health funding

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The Remote Area Planning and Development Board has welcomed the Federal Government's \$11.4 million investment on mental health support initiatives announced with other drought support measures.

"I know from first hand, having lived through many, drought is a taxing time, on the land, on finances and on people's mental health," RAPAD Chairman Rob Chandler said.

RAPAD is made up of the seven local government areas of the central west Queensland and it wants the government funding to be targeted so services reach the right people at the right times, are well planned to avoid duplication and be based on researched needs of the community.

"As a tax payer I want to see the communities getting optimum care and the government delivering the best possible outcomes from this investment," Cr Rob Chandler said.

Over the past six years of drought in our region we have seen the wave of good will and investment to support communities come and go.

As an advocacy organisation we know if unmanaged and poorly researched the wave could lead to duplication and missed opportunities.

RAPAD also has a strong interest in supporting the agricultural community and has demonstrated this through its long running and successful stewardship of the Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland (RFCSNQ).

RAPAD board member, Mayor of Boulia Shire Council, Chairman of the RFCSNQ and grazier Rick Britton says there are clear and helpful synergies between the services.

"We have experience in assisting producers in financial hardship which often is tinged with emotional hardship. We understand the back story and we see at times where service gaps exist or at worst duplicate," Councillor Britton said.

The Beyond the Dust report released by the Western Queensland Drought Appeal had many recommendations to help build resilience in communities going through drought.

It concluded with a set of four principles, to underpin strong governance arrangements and to support resilience building in the Central West region, one of those was to value local knowledge.

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The report also set out 17 major recommendations which included transforming governance to foster local decision making.

RAPAD is keen to see the Western Qld Primary Health Network play a coordinating and commissioning role in the delivery of any new funds coming into the region to ensure optimum service delivery.

RAPAD is not a mental health service provider however our mantle is to facilitate and advocate the best outcome for this region and a well coordinated, adequately funded, actual needs based health and well being program which enhances and supports our community is in everyone's best interest.

"We know our community better than anyone and we want to make ourselves available to support the department and it's service delivery," Councillor Chandler said.

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